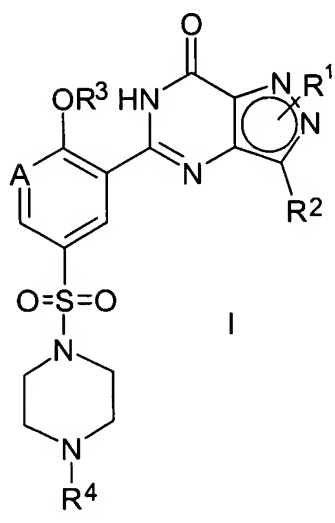


**Amendments to the claims:**

1-17 (cancelled)

18. (currently amended) A process for the production of a compound of general formula I:



wherein

A represents CH or N;

R<sup>1</sup> represents H, lower alkyl (which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by O), Het, alkylHet, aryl or alkylaryl, which latter five groups are all optionally substituted (and/or, in the case of lower alkyl, optionally terminated) by one or more substituents selected from halo, cyano, nitro, lower alkyl, OR<sup>5</sup>, C(O)R<sup>6</sup>, C(O)OR<sup>7</sup>, C(O)NR<sup>8</sup>R<sup>9</sup>, NR<sup>10a</sup>R<sup>10b</sup> and SO<sub>2</sub>NR<sup>11a</sup>R<sup>11b</sup>;

R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> independently represent lower alkyl;

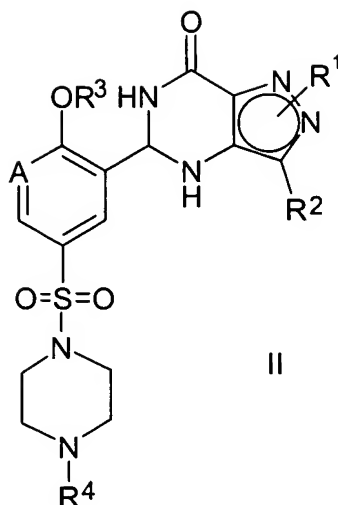
R<sup>3</sup> represents lower alkyl, which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by oxygen;

Het represents an optionally substituted four- to twelve-membered heterocyclic group, which group contains one or more heteroatoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur;

R<sup>5</sup>, R<sup>6</sup>, R<sup>7</sup>, R<sup>8</sup>, R<sup>9</sup>, R<sup>11a</sup> and R<sup>11b</sup> independently represent H or lower alkyl;

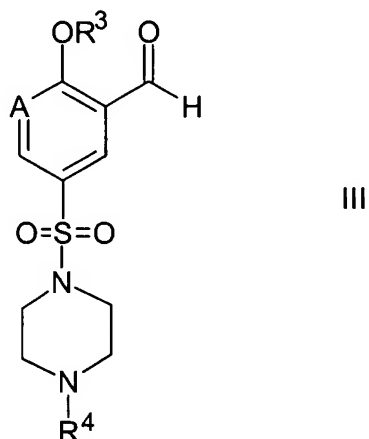
R<sup>10a</sup> and R<sup>10b</sup> either independently represent, H or lower alkyl or, together with the nitrogen atom to which they are attached, represent azetidiny, pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl,

which process comprises the dehydrogenation of a compound of general formula II,

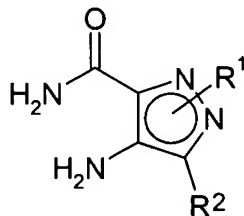


wherein A, R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup>, R<sup>3</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> are as defined above; and

~~A process as claimed in any one of the preceding claims,~~ wherein the compound of general formula II is prepared by reaction of a compound of formula III,



~~wherein A, R<sup>3</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> are as defined in any one of Claims 1 and 6 to 10 (as appropriate),~~ with a compound of general formula IV,

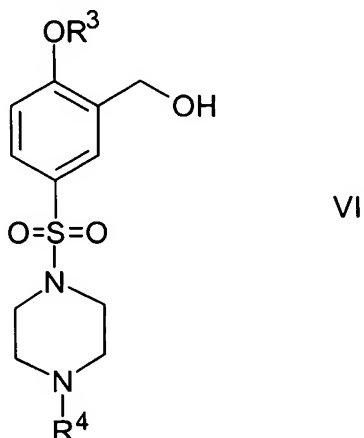


~~wherein R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>2</sup> are as defined in any one of Claims 1 to 5 and 10.~~

19. (original) A process as claimed in Claim 18, wherein the compound of general formula I is formed in a "one pot" procedure, in which a compound of formula III is

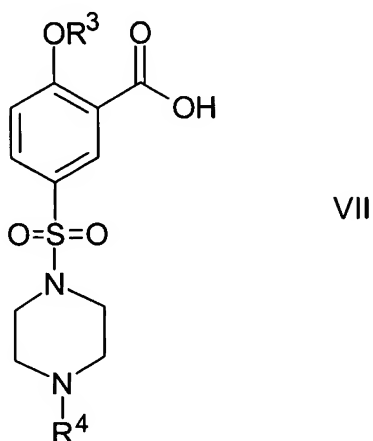
reacted with a compound of general formula IV, after which the dehydrogenation reaction is performed directly on the intermediate compound of general formula II, formed *in situ*.

20. (currently amended) A process as claimed in Claim 18 ~~or Claim 19~~, wherein, in the compound of formula III, A represents CH, and that compound is prepared by oxidation of a compound of formula VI,



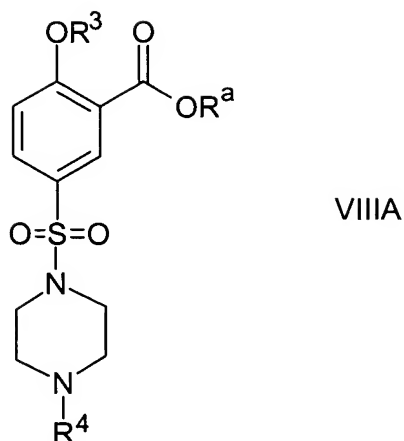
~~wherein R³ and R⁴ are as defined in any one of Claims 1 and 6 to 10 (as appropriate).~~

21. (currently amended) A process as claimed in Claim 20, wherein the compound of formula VI is prepared by reduction of a corresponding carboxylic acid of formula VII,



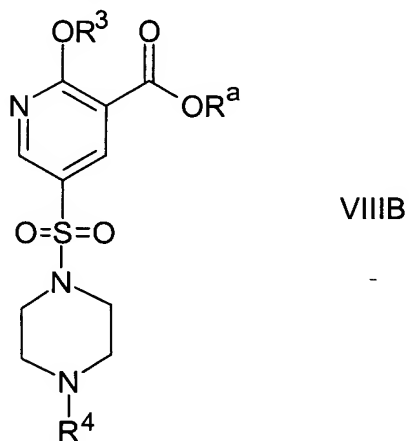
~~wherein R³ and R⁴ are as defined in any one of Claims 1 and 6 to 10 (as appropriate).~~

22. (currently amended) A process as claimed in Claim 20, wherein the compound of formula VI is prepared by esterification of a compound of formula VII as defined in Claim 21 to form a compound of formula VIIIA,



wherein R<sup>a</sup> represents lower alkyl and R<sup>3</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> are as defined in ~~any one of Claims 4 and 6 to 10 (as appropriate)~~ claim 18, followed by reduction of the ester of formula VIII A.

23. (currently amended) A process as claimed in Claim 18 ~~or Claim 19~~, wherein, in the compound of formula III, A represents N, and that compound is prepared by reduction of a corresponding compound of formula VIIIB,



wherein R<sup>a</sup> is as defined in Claim 22, and R<sup>3</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> are as defined in Claim 18 ~~any one of Claims 1 and 6 to 10 (as appropriate)~~.

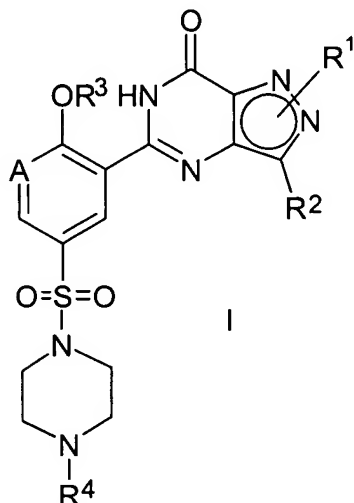
24. (currently amended) A compound of general formula II as defined in ~~Claim 4~~ Claim 18.

25. (original) A compound of formula III, as defined in Claim 18.

26. (original) A compound of general formula VI, as defined in Claim 20.

27. (original) A compound of formula VIIIA, as defined in Claim 22.

28. (original) A process for the production of compounds of general formula I:



wherein

A represents CH or N;

R<sup>1</sup> represents H, lower alkyl (which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by O), Het, alkylHet, aryl or alkylaryl, which latter five groups are all optionally substituted (and/or, in the case of lower alkyl, optionally terminated) by one or more substituents selected from halo, cyano, nitro, lower alkyl, OR<sup>5</sup>, C(O)R<sup>6</sup>, C(O)OR<sup>7</sup>, C(O)NR<sup>8</sup>R<sup>9</sup>, NR<sup>10a</sup>R<sup>10b</sup> and SO<sub>2</sub>NR<sup>11a</sup>R<sup>11b</sup>;

R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> independently represent lower alkyl;

R<sup>3</sup> represents lower alkyl, which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by oxygen;

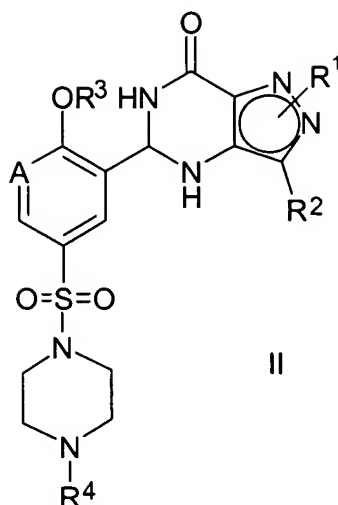
Het represents an optionally substituted four- to twelve-membered heterocyclic group, which group contains one or more heteroatoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur;

R<sup>5</sup>, R<sup>6</sup>, R<sup>7</sup>, R<sup>8</sup>, R<sup>9</sup>, R<sup>11a</sup> and R<sup>11b</sup> independently represent H or lower alkyl;

R<sup>10a</sup> and R<sup>10b</sup> either independently represent, H or lower alkyl or, together with the nitrogen atom to which they are attached, represent azetidiny, pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl;

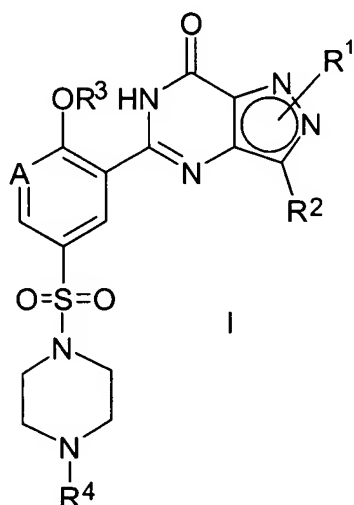
with the proviso that the compound of formula I is not sildenafil;

which process comprises the dehydrogenation of a compound of general formula II,



wherein A, R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup>, R<sup>3</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> are as defined above.

29. (original) A process for the production of compounds of general formula I:



wherein

A represents CH;

R<sup>1</sup> represents H, lower alkyl (which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by O), Het, alkylHet, aryl or alkylaryl, which latter five groups are all optionally substituted (and/or, in the case of lower alkyl, optionally terminated) by one or more substituents selected from halo, cyano, nitro, lower alkyl, OR<sup>5</sup>, C(O)R<sup>6</sup>, C(O)OR<sup>7</sup>, C(O)NR<sup>8</sup>R<sup>9</sup>, NR<sup>10a</sup>R<sup>10b</sup> and SO<sub>2</sub>NR<sup>11a</sup>R<sup>11b</sup>;

R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> independently represent lower alkyl;

R<sup>3</sup> represents lower alkyl, which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by oxygen;

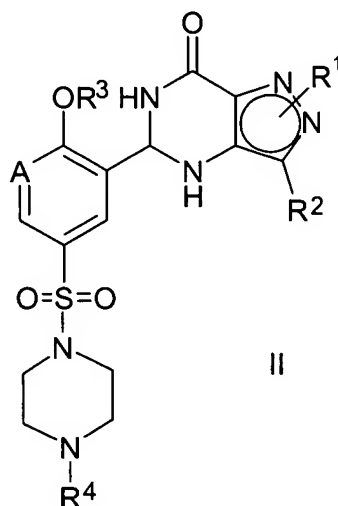
Het represents an optionally substituted four- to twelve-membered heterocyclic group, which group contains one or more heteroatoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur;

$R^5$ ,  $R^6$ ,  $R^7$ ,  $R^8$ ,  $R^9$ ,  $R^{11a}$  and  $R^{11b}$  independently represent H or lower alkyl;

$R^{10a}$  and  $R^{10b}$  either independently represent, H or lower alkyl or, together with the nitrogen atom to which they are attached, represent azetidiny, pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl;

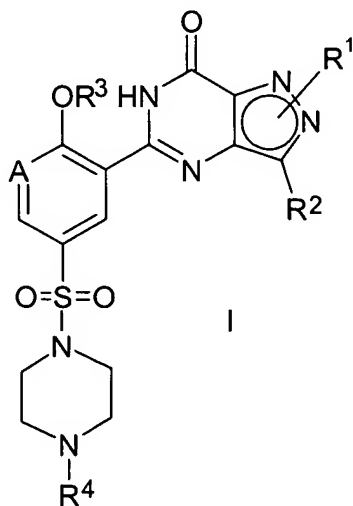
with the proviso that the compound of formula I is not sildenafil;

which process comprises the dehydrogenation of a compound of general formula II,



wherein A,  $R^1$ ,  $R^2$ ,  $R^3$  and  $R^4$  are as defined above.

30. (original) A process for the production of compounds of general formula I:



wherein

A represents N;

R<sup>1</sup> represents H, lower alkyl (which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by O), Het, alkylHet, aryl or alkylaryl, which latter five groups are all optionally substituted (and/or, in the case of lower alkyl, optionally terminated) by one or more substituents selected from halo, cyano, nitro, lower alkyl, OR<sup>5</sup>, C(O)R<sup>6</sup>, C(O)OR<sup>7</sup>, C(O)NR<sup>8</sup>R<sup>9</sup>, NR<sup>10a</sup>R<sup>10b</sup> and SO<sub>2</sub>NR<sup>11a</sup>R<sup>11b</sup>;

R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> independently represent lower alkyl;

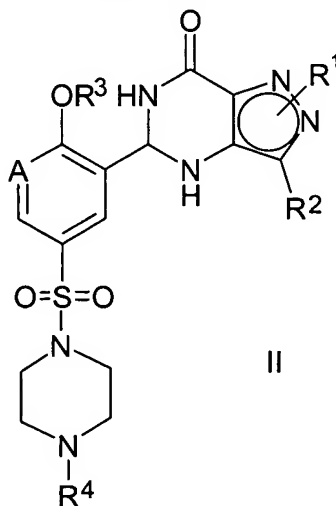
R<sup>3</sup> represents lower alkyl, which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by oxygen;

Het represents an optionally substituted four- to twelve-membered heterocyclic group, which group contains one or more heteroatoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur;

R<sup>5</sup>, R<sup>6</sup>, R<sup>7</sup>, R<sup>8</sup>, R<sup>9</sup>, R<sup>11a</sup> and R<sup>11b</sup> independently represent H or lower alkyl;

R<sup>10a</sup> and R<sup>10b</sup> either independently represent, H or lower alkyl or, together with the nitrogen atom to which they are attached, represent azetidiny, pyrrolidiny or piperidiny,

which process comprises the dehydrogenation of a compound of general formula II,



wherein A, R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup>, R<sup>3</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> are as defined above.